Prove All Things

1 Thess. 5:21 Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

Intro. Some upset about what I said last Sunday. An old Stoic proverb, "Men are tormented by the opinions they have of things, rather than by the things themselves.

No matter how we may interpret the facts and realities of life, or how often we may change our conception of them, the facts and realities of life remain the same.

The insane man's masterpiece, "The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea." Our opinions of things no more change things than did the imaginings of the insane man change the canvas.

But, whereas this is true, it is also true that our opinions of things change us and create our world in which we live.

We have a right to live in the world of our own making, but we hardly have the right to compel all others to live in the same world. The best we can do is to compare worlds together and determine which world is the best for us to live in.

Text. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

If I am ~~compelled to~~ convinced that the interpretation of the world by science is the best yet and I must reconcile myself to it, how can I, holding the religious opinions that I do?

I. The orthodox theology of the Catholic and Protestant churches is the same. God in the beginning created a perfect world by fiat, completing it in six days and resting on the seventh. The original parents in the Garden of Eden sinned and brot condemnation not only upon themselves but upon the whole human race. The whole race, because of this original sin, has been doomed, without God or hope both for the present and the future. In order that the wrath of God against a sinful world might be

appeased, Christ was sent into the world to die as a substitute for the sins of man, thus enabling God to forgive in consistance with honor and eternal justice. As men accept this death of Christ on their behalf they are saved from the wrath of God and are assured of eternal life and happiness.

II. Accepting the scientific interpretation of the world, how can I hold to our orthodox theology?

1. By doing just what Christ did to the O.T. law. Christ fulfilled the law by taking out of it all of its false interpretations and interpreting it anew in accordance with His fuller understanding of God and life.

2. According to science God did not create a perfect world in six days and rest on the seventh. This world is hundreds of thousands and millions of years old, never was completed and is still in process of creation. Nor is there any scientific evidence that man was created in a state of perfection and then fell.

3. Now, how can I square my theology with scientific truth?

   a. Van Husen's conception of a day in eternity.

   b. The account in Genesis not original with the early Hebrews. Based on the Babylonian account of creation and made to square with the Hebrew conception ~~that~~ of just one God creator of heaven and earth.

   c. The striking thing about the Genesis account is, that tho unscientific and ancient it is nevertheless a very close observation of nature as it really is.

   d. Why then did the ancient man conceive of a fall? Because he could not think of God as less than perfect who made all things perfect. He, therefore must have made man perfect. But man knew himself not to be perfect. It could not be God's fault and so it must be man's fault

hence the story of explanation.

e. But if there was no fall, there could be no wrath of God that had to be appeased by substitution for sin in the death of his son.

This conception is in accord with Oriental monarchy and justice. Our present conception of justice and honor is entirely different. To accept the ancient oriental sense of justice and honor which had to be appeased by death as our own today would be hideous.

f. The scientific account of creation does not do away with man's imperfection or sinfulness, nor with man's need of a God to help him to reach perfection.

A self-conscious man acknowledges that he is imperfect and inclined to wrongdoing, and that he cannot help himself, or alone, reach perfection

The death of Christ reveals the help of a loving God, full of compassion and forgiveness toward his ~~penitent~~ erring children and willing to die in order to save them.

Vicarious sacrifice is the only road to human perfection. It is one of the principles of life. God acted naturally when he gave his only begotten son to the world.

Bear ye one another's burdens & so fulfil the law.

Auto-suggestion - its power. We should not put the emphasis upon sin & imperfection but upon God & the possibility of gaining perfection, of building God's kingdom.